

Iatan/Weston Missouri River Corridor

Conservation Opportunity Area



Central Dissected
Till Plains



Wooded river bluffs provide important habitat for migrating birds.

David Bedan

On July 4, 1804, the Lewis and Clark expedition traveled a stretch of the Missouri River between Kansas City and St. Joseph. At that time, the river flowed in a braided channel with numerous islands, side chutes and backwaters. Nearly annual flooding created a complex and shifting mosaic of bottomland forest, marshes, wet prairies and sandbars. Large portions of the bottoms were open prairie and marsh complexes. This particular stretch contained small amounts of wet prairie and more extensive timberlands.

Extensive draining, bank stabilization and leveeing drastically altered the Missouri River floodplain. Today, most of the islands are gone and the rich bottomland soils are now productive cropland. While most wetlands have been drained, some remain. Many wetlands are in conservation ownership or wetland reserve programs.

The adjacent bluffs are primarily covered with woodlands and forest, with some land cleared for pasture.

The broad alluvial plain of the Iatan/Weston Missouri River Corridor formerly supported an abundance of marsh plants and animals. Some can still be found at small scattered marshes throughout the COA. Several toads, including the Great Plains toad and plains spadefoot, are restricted to the Missouri River floodplain.

Bluff woodlands and forests provide habitat for various animals. Weston Bend State Park is known for neotropical migrating birds during spring and fall migration, along with breeding species such as worm-eating warblers and scarlet tanagers. The Missouri River and its tributaries also support a variety of aquatic species of conservation concern, including brassy minnows, silver chub and sturgeon chub.

Iatan/Weston Missouri River Corridor Conservation Strategies:

- Restore, to the extent possible, the natural hydrologic processes and connectivity of the Missouri River to its associated floodplain using levee setbacks, dike notching, chute restoration, etc.
- Restore in-stream habitats for native plants and animals.
- Reduce or eradicate invasive plants and animals.
- Conserve high quality marshes, wetlands, woodlands and forests for neotropical migratory songbirds and species of conservation concern.
- Restore natural communities associated with historic floodplain (wet prairies, marshes, riparian forests) and upland habitats on river bluffs (oak/hickory woodlands and forests).
- Build partnerships through outreach and education; increase private landowner participation in habitat improvements; build public support.



Jim Rathert, Missouri Department of Conservation

Yellow marsh cress is native to both North America and Eurasia. This wetland plant prefers flood-prone areas with a history of disturbance.

Priority Research and Inventory Needs

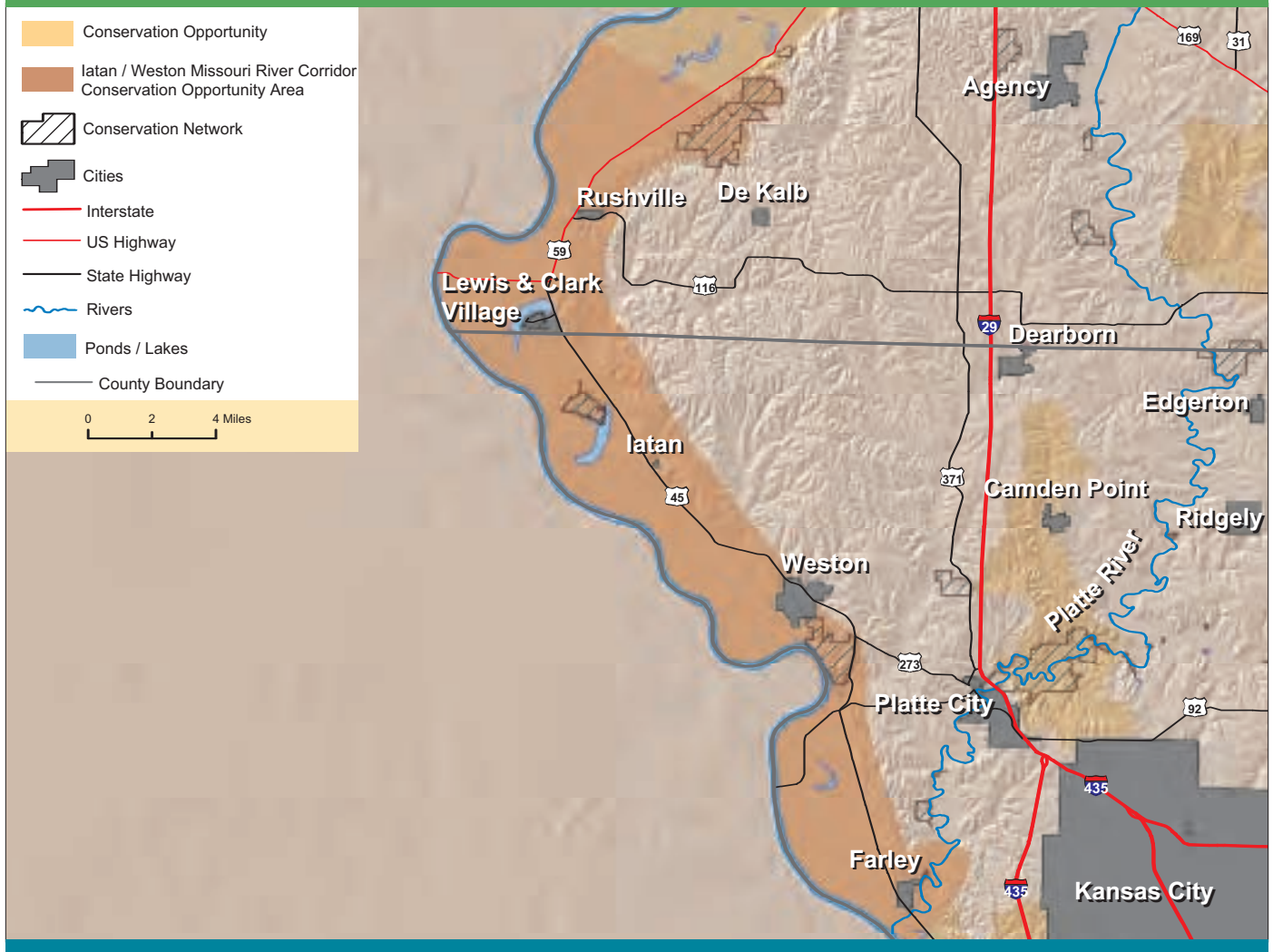
- Inventory terrestrial and aquatic species of conservation concern and invasive species.
- Survey for Great Plains toads, Woodhouse's toads and plains spadefoots.
- Gather baseline data for pre-project habitat parameters (biotic and abiotic).
- Research best methods to control invasive species.
- Gather information on public opinion and attitudes.

Conservation Partners

Existing: Audubon Missouri; Mid-America Regional Council; Farm Service Agency (FSA); Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS); U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE); U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS); Missouri Department of Natural Resources (DNR); Missouri Department of Conservation (MDC)

Potential: National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF); Kansas City Power and Light (KCP&L); Burroughs Audubon Society; Midland Empire Audubon Society; Ducks Unlimited (DU); The Nature Conservancy – Missouri Chapter; Northland Trails and Greenways Initiative; Pheasants Forever (PF); Platte County Parks and Recreation; Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks

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Funding Sources

Existing: MDC annual budget; DNR annual budget; USACE Recovery and Mitigation Funds; FSA Conservation Reserve Program; NRCS Wetland Reserve Program; Missouri Bird Conservation Initiative Grants

Promising Future Sources: NWTF Wild Turkey Super Fund; DU Conservation Projects Program; PF Wetland Restoration Projects; Missouri Conservation Heritage Foundation Grants; KCP&L Corporate Contributions Program; MDC State Wildlife Grants; MDC Wildlife Diversity Funds; USFWS Partners for Fish and Wildlife Program; Environmental Protection Agency Region 7 Funds

Existing Conservation Network

Bluffwoods Conservation Area; Weston Bend State Park; Little Bean Marsh Conservation Area and Natural Area; Lewis and Clark State Park; Samuel City Access; KCP&L Iatan Marshes



Jim Rathert, Missouri Department of Conservation

King Rails are rare nesters in Missouri. This state endangered bird depends on permanent marshes. King rails prefer wetlands with abundant grasses, sedges, rushes and cattails. They prey primarily on aquatic beetles, semiaquatic beetles, fish, mollusks and crustaceans.

Weston Bend State Park



A scenic overlook at Weston Bend State Park offers one of the most expansive views of the Missouri River. Because the park is located along a wooded river corridor, it offers excellent bird watching, especially during spring and fall migrations.

David Bedan

Conservation Challenges

The Iatan/Weston Missouri River Corridor has been altered by channelization, drainage and conversion to agriculture. Dams on the upper Missouri River have radically altered the water flow conditions beneficial for some fish. Sizable patches of second-growth forest still remain on bluffs. Finding ways to promote both agriculture and native ecosystems will be key to future

conservation success. Other potential challenges include the public's limited knowledge about river restoration, lack of consistent funding, river level fluctuations, urbanization and increased transportation infrastructure, changing agency priorities, controlling invasive species, performance measures and coordination of multiple partners' needs.

To learn more about the Iatan/Weston Missouri River Corridor Conservation Opportunity Area, please contact:



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